

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 171731Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9393
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2019

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: GIL ROBLES' RESIGNATION MAY CONTRIBUTE TO CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATIC UNITY

SUMMARY: JOSE MARIA GIL ROBLES, 79-YEAR-OLD PRESIDENT OF
THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POPULAR DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION
(FPD), STEPEED DOWN FROM HIS POST ON SATURDAY, IN A MOVE
WIDELY HAILED BY OTHER CD LEADERS AND THE MEDIA AS A
STATESMANLIKE DECISION WHICH COULD GET THE STALLED PROCESS
OF CD UNITY BACK ON THE TRACK, OR AT LEAST CONTRIBUTE TO
GREATER COHERSION OF THE POLITICAL CENTER IN THE COMING
ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. GIL ROBLES, CITING CONTINUING ATTACKS ON HIM AS THE
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PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO CD UNITY (WHILE REJECTING THEM AS
INACCURATE), CALLED IN HIS RESIGNATION LETTER FOR THE
CONVENING OF A CD "CONSTITUENT CONGRESS" AS A FIRST STEP
TOWARD THE UNITY OF ALL SPANISH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. HE
ADDED THAT HE HAD LONG INTENDED TO STEP DOWN ONCE THE FPD
WAS WELL ON ITS WAY TO LEGALIZATION AND DESIRED TO LEAVE
THE PARTY IN THE HANDS OF YOUNGER LEADERS MORE ATTUNED TO

THE TIMES. IN A FOLLOW-UP PRESS CONFERENCE, JOSE MARIA GIL ROBLES, JR., WHO REMAINS AS FPD SEC GEN (THE PRESIDENCY WAS LEFT VACANT AS AN EXPLICIT EARNEST OF THE FPD'S DESIRE FOR CD UNITY), STATED THAT THE FPD'S BASIC ORIENTATION WOULD NOT CHANGE.

2. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERS ACROSS THE BOARD HAVE ROUNDLY PRAISED GIL ROBLES' DECISION, ALTHOUGH NONE OF THEM HAS RESPONDED PUBLICLY TO HIS CALL FOR A CONSTITUENT CONGRESS. CATALAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER ANTON CANELLAS AND ANTONIO VAZQUEZ OF RUIZ GIMENEZ' "DEMOCRATIC LEFT" (ID) TOLD EMBOFFS PRIVATELY THAT THE PROPOSAL WAS A POSITIVE ONE WHICH COULD LEAD TO THE FORMATION OF A UNIFORMITY IN MOST OF SPAIN, BUT THE CATALAN, BASQUE AND PROBABLY GALICIAN PARTIES WOULD RETAIN THEIR SEPARATE IDENTITIES. THEY SAW THE PRESS OF ELECTIONS PREVENTING ANY SUCH CONGRESS, HOWEVER, UNTIL AFTER THE JUNE CONTEST.

3. CANELLAS AND VAZQUEZ WERE UNCERTAIN WHAT GIL ROBLES' RESIGNATION WOULD MEAN FOR ELECTORAL UNITY OF THE CENTER. THEY REJECTED ANY THOUGHT THAT THE CD TEAM MIGHT FUSE WITH CENTROL DEMOCRATICO, PORTRAYING THE CENTRO AS HAMSTRUNG BY ITS OWN HETEROGENEITY AND EXTREMELY WEAK OUTSIDE OF MADRID, WHILE THE CD TEAM'S HARD WORK NATION-WIDE, THEY SAID, WAS PRODUCING RESULTS. THEY FOCUSSED INSTEAD ON THE NEED TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE EVENTUAL MODALITITES FOR ELECTORAL COOPERATION AND ON THE DESIRABILITY OF ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA'S PPDC RETURN TO THE CD TEAM'S FOLD, WHICH THEY VIEWED AS A REAL POSSIBILITY BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY TERMED HIS MIDDLING CONFIDENTIAL

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TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF OTHERS IN THE CENTRO. (ACCORDING TO VAZQUEZ, PPDC IS GETTING SHORT SHRIFT IN THE ALLOCATION OF PLACES ON THE CENTRO'S TENTATIVE ELECTORAL LISTS.) CANELLAS VOLUNTEERED THAT ONE OF HIS OWN PROPOSALS FOR EQUIPO-CENTRO ELECTORAL COOPERATION WAS FOR THE EQUIPO NOT TO PRESENT SLATES IN SOME PROVINCES WHERE THE CENTRO PLACED PPDC CANDIDATES HIGH ON ITS LIST, AND HE ALLUDED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A FORMAL CD TEAM - CENTRO ALLIANCE IF, IN THE STRETCH, IT APPEARED NECESSARY TO A STRONG CENTER SHOWING.

4. VIEWED FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CENTER, CENTRO DEMOCRATICO LEADER JUAN ANTONIO ORTEGA (HIMSELF A "TACITO" CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT) TOLD EMBOFFS THAT HE JUDGED GIL ROBLES' RESIGNATION, WHICH HE SAW AS PARTLY BROUGHT ON BY PRESSURES FROM WITHIN GIL ROBLES' OWN PARTY, WAS A GOOD THING THAT WOULD HELP TO CLEAR THE AIR IN THE CENTER. ORTEGA THOUGHT THE EQUIPO WOULD NOW MAKE AN EFFORT TO SNATCH ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA BACK FROM THE CENTRO IN THE NAME OF CD UNITY OR AT LEAST TRY TO INFLUENCE A REMODELING OF THE CENTRO ALONG

LINES (UNSPECIFIED) THAT THE EQUIPO THOUGHT MIGHT BE CONDUCTIVE TO EVENTUAL ELECTORAL ALLIANCE. ORTEGA DID NOT SEEM TOO TROUBLED BY THIS, REITERATING HIS PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTHY SPANISH POLITICS: AS BROAD A MEASURE OF CENTRIST COALITION AS POSSIBLE.

5. COMMENT: GIL ROBLES' DECISION CLARIFIES THE MADRID-BASED CD PICTURE, WHERE RUIZ GIMENEZ IS NOW THE UNDISPUTED LEADING ACTIVE FIGURE. MORE IMPORTANT, IT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GREATER CD - AND EVEN CENTER - UNITY BEFORE ELECTIONS. AS ORTEGA INDICATED, THE EQUIPO IS INDEED CERTAIN TO BE ENCOURAGING ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA TO RETURN TO THE FOLD. SUCH A "RATIONALIZATION" OF THE CENTER, COMBINED WITH THE ARTICULATION BY THE CENTRO OF A MORE COHERENT POLITICAL INE, COULD THEN ACTUALLY MAKE EQUIPO-CENTRO ELECTORAL COOPERATION LESS DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, ALTHOUGH IN THIS CONTEXT, THE CD TEAM MIGHT WELL

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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